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ABSTRACT

This monograph is part of a series of reports focusing on women's studies in higher education. After summarizing the historical growth of continuing education for women and women's studies, this monograph describes the implementation of a study by the U.S. National Institute of Education on re-entry women and the field of women's studies. ("Re-entry women" is defined as women who have never completed higher education at the traditional age and are now going back to school.) The general purposes of this study are (1) to define the problem area more precisely and emphasize the significance of re-entry women to the field of women's studies; (2) to review the pertinent literature that has been uncovered thus far (including ongoing projects); (3) to discuss ambiguities and problems that future researchers will face; and (4) to make specific recommendations for the kinds of research needed. (BM)

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RE-ENTRY WOMEN INVOLVED IN WOMEN'S STUDIES

Women's Studies Monograph Series

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PREFACE

This monograph is part of a series of eight, commissioned by the National Institute of Education (NIE), following recommendations presented in Seven Years Later: Women's Studies Programs in 1976 by Florence Howe.

Seven Years Later was commissioned and published by the National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs. It was the first federally financed investigation of women's studies. Howe visited and reported on 15 mature women's studies programs, in the context of national trends and directions within women's studies. She focused on some areas (funding and faculty, for example, in 4-year colleges and universities) and excluded others (community colleges, for example) entirely.

The eight new monographs take up some of the questions Howe explored; they also initiate explorations of untouched areas. All are concerned primarily with higher education.

Each monograph reviews literature relevant to its focus produced during this first decade of women's studies. Each also attempts to provide definition to a field in the process of development, a complex interdisciplinary area of scholarship and curriculum that is also a strategy for educational change. Beyond definition, each monograph recommends research essential for the future development of women's studies and important to educational research more broadly.

While producing these eight monographs, the researchers met for 2 days to compare perspectives and conclusions. As a group, we agreed to offer four formal recommendations to the National Institute of Education and to all other Federal agencies and private foundations that might pursue and support research and development in women's studies.

1. The need for future monographs. We recognize the importance of continuing the development of information about relatively unexplored aspects of women's studies. Among those aspects that need examination, the following are especially important:

   a. Graduate programs and graduate education in women's studies.

   b. Schools of education and women's studies activities.

   c. Women's studies in the elementary and secondary schools.

   d. Noncredit curriculum development in women's centers, continuing education for women, and community-based centers.

2. The need for a data base on women's studies. All eight monographs recommend the development of a data base on women's studies as a necessary prelude to research design and activity. Since women's studies has developed in different ways and at different rates on almost all campuses throughout the country, such a data base must be longitudinal in design. While we are recommending its development in higher education, such a data base eventually will need to be extended to all areas of education. We recommend that annual updates be built into the data base to ensure its proper maintenance and continued usefulness.

3. The qualifications of research personnel in women's studies. We believe that the distinctive and complex nature of women's studies, as well as the fact that it is still a developing field, makes it essential that researchers be thoroughly informed about

women's studies and be prepared to involve women's studies practitioners in every aspect of research design and process. We are hopeful that NIE and other Federal agencies, private foundations, and research institutions will place responsibility for research in women's studies in the hands of those experienced and knowledgeable about the area.

4. Considerations significant to evaluation research and methodology. We believe that the evaluation of women's studies in higher education will be an important activity of the coming decade. Such evaluation will serve the researcher interested in the processes of changing higher education, as well as those charged with administering institutions. Such evaluation should, on principle, also clearly serve the developmental needs of women's studies programs, engaging them in the design and processes of research, as well as in the determination of the uses to which research will be put. Evaluations should be conducted onsite, with the cooperation of program participants, and within a framework of longitudinal data about that program and others nationally. Researchers and evaluators should be sensitive to the work of the National Women's Studies Association in this regard, and its activities serving the needs of women's studies programs.

Detailed, further recommendations appear in each of the eight monographs.

We wish to express our appreciation to the National Institute of Education for pursuing this

research, and particularly to C.B. Crump, who directed the Women's Studies Planning Studies project.

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SUMMARY

The general purposes of this study are: to define the problem area more precisely and emphasize the significance of re-entry women to the field of women's studies; to review the pertinent literature that has been uncovered thus far (including ongoing projects); to discuss ambiguities and problems that future researchers will face; and, finally, to make specific recommendations for the kinds of research needed.

The introductory section of this report compares the historical growth of the continuing education for women (CEW) movement of the 1960s with that of the women's studies (WS) movement, which began roughly 10 years later. The original motivation for establishing centers to encourage women to return to school came in the late 1950s in the post-Sputnik era of concern for improving higher education. Progressive educators pointed to the underutilization of womanpower that resulted from the sharp decline in female enrollment in colleges in the post-World War II decade. As male veterans went back to school in large numbers because of government subsidies, women who normally would have gone to college stayed home and had babies, creating the baby boom of the 1950s.

Concern for unused female talent was reinforced first by the realization that educational institutions were hostile to part-time and older students, and later by the awareness that many suburban housewives were intensely dissatisfied with their lives. Betty Friedan's "problem that has no name," in her Feminine Mystique (1963) struck a responsive chord and provided a link between the CEW movement and the later women's liberation movement.

The women's studies movement, which developed as the academic arm of the women's movement, went beyond the CEW call for equal educational opportunity for

older women and demanded a drastic revision of the male-centered curriculum, and ultimately of the whole male-centered society. Beginning with courses in the late 1960s and programs in the early 1970s, women's studies has become an established area of study with its own research-oriented journals and, since 1977, with its own organization, the National Women's Studies Association.

Section 1 also discusses the intermingling of the two movements (CEW and WS) and the need for research in this area: women's studies, while helpful for all women (and men), is especially meaningful for older women because it provides the knowledge and insights they need to understand the social forces that stereotype women and men, forcing them into rigid, sex-typed roles and sex-segregated jobs. Liberated by the knowledge that their problems are shared by all women and are not due to a personal deficiency, and bolstered by a new sense of pride in women's achievements, these "returnees" are ready to begin a new life. In turn, they contribute to women's studies by sharing their own broader experience with younger students and, often, with younger instructors. Every women's studies coordinator knows that re-entry women are vital to the program, yet this apparently has never been documented. The information gained in such research would be enormously useful in helping women's studies planners be more responsive to the needs of this special group of women.

The review of the literature in Section 2 reveals numerous studies of re-entry women and a smaller literature about women's studies, but only three studies -- all inconclusive -- that attempt to assess the interaction between returning women and women's studies. In speculating on the reasons for this dearth of research, I suggest that the traditional mode of disciplinary research is at least partly responsible for the failure to ask the broader, interdisciplinary questions that are required. I also suggest as an explanation that "re-entry women" are

relatively easy to identify and study, whereas "women's studies" is a more elusive subject for research.

Section 3 discusses some of the ambiguities and problems likely to confront the researcher: the changing profile of the re-entry woman in the last decade; the evolving definition of women's studies as research in the area expands and programs become established; the difficulty in identifying women's studies programs among the large number and variety of women's programs now in existence; the hostility of traditional faculty to both re-entry women and women's studies; and finally, the distorted image many older women have of both the women's movement and women's studies.

In Section 4, seven recommendations for research are made, noting the importance of many simultaneous approaches (because of the complexity of the problem and the paucity of data), the need for adequate control groups and a significantly broader data base, and the value of longitudinal studies, onsite visits, and indepth interviews to supplement questionnaires. The first three recommendations detail the data gathering needs in the area that is the focus of this study: the numbers of re-entry women involved in women's studies; the changing profile of the re-entry woman and her impact on women's studies; and the impact on women's studies of her involvement. The next three recommendations are for studies of re-entry women and women's studies in specific settings that have not been adequately researched: community colleges; centers geared especially for returning women; and women's centers of all kinds, both off and on campuses. The final recommendation, for a survey and assessment of institutional attitudes towards women's programs of all kinds, is intended to produce, in effect, a guide for the mature feminist contemplating a return to school.

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1. INTRODUCTION

A growing number of women who never completed higher education at the traditional age have been going back to school. They have been variously labeled "re-entry," "returning women," "re-admits" (Hunter College), and even "re-engaging women" (University of Colorado). They have been defined in various ways, but there is a general consensus that these are women who interrupted their education for at least several years in order to do something else, usually to raise a family or work or both.

The movement back to school began with a trickle in the early 1960s and became an avalanche by the mid-1970s.[1] In 1963, there were only 20 Centers for Continuing Education of Women (CCEWs); 100 such programs had been identified by 1966, and 376 by 1973. By 1976, there were 500 programs geared specifically to mature women. The number of women 35 and over enrolled in these centers was 495,000 in 1972, the first year the student population in this age bracket was large enough for the Bureau of the Census to survey.[2]

The original stimulus to provide centers for women to make the transition back to school came from a national concern about the underutilization of talented women who had married and moved to the suburbs in the 1950s to raise families instead of completing college. This concern was first articulated by a few progressive educators at a 1957 American Council of Education conference (funded by the Carnegie Foundation), the first national meeting to deal seriously with the concept of continuing education for women.

Mary Bunting, who later became president of Radcliffe College, noted at the conference the total lack of responsiveness of educational institutions to the needs of this "intelligent and educated" group of

women. Later, the concern expanded to include the realization that many of these middle-class housewives were themselves dissatisfied with their lives. Betty Friedan's "problem that has no name," in her Feminine Mystique (1963), struck a responsive chord and provided a link between the CEW movement and the later women's liberation movement.[3]

Early Development of CCEWs

The early development of CCEWs focused on the barriers to achievement by middle-class, educated women and on their right to self-fulfillment through creative work. The early prototypes, all funded by the Carnegie Foundation, were: the Radcliffe Institute of Independent Study (1960), geared then and now to only the highest level of scholars and artists; the Minnesota Plan (1960), which was the first CCEW in a large university and brought together a variety of services (including child care) and courses (credit and noncredit) directed at a more heterogeneous group of women; and the CCEW at Sarah Lawrence College. (1962), which was designed to attract women similar to the mothers of the upper middle-class white women whom the college traditionally served and which provided a period of adjustment between home and the regular academic programs.

All of these early centers, though directed at different populations, assumed that their students would be married and would need assistance in combining families and professional careers during their childbearing years. The main concerns expressed at conferences on CEW in the 1960s were the need for educational institutions to be more flexible and to adapt their scheduling and programming to this new population, and the need for special counseling and career guidance. There was also talk of the need for more part-time jobs for women -- later to become a controversial issue -- and the need for child-care centers. The latter effort was notably unsuccessful,

as documented in a study done in 1970 of 454 institutions: less than half of these had made any accommodations to the needs of returning women, and only 5 percent provided child-care services. As of 1976, Sarah Lawrence still was not providing child care.[4]

The "typical profile" of the woman returning to school in 196[illegible]-65, based on interviews with 500 women who attended the University of Michigan CCEW, was as follows: 37 years old, married, living in the area, with a professional or student husband, two or three children, some college, and more likely than not a bachelor's degree. (While it was not specified, she probably also was white.) About 85 percent of the women gave as their chief reason for attending the desire to prepare for employment: they needed help in thinking through job possibilities, in selecting an educational program appropriate to their goals, and in dealing with problems of admission, registration, class scheduling, and financial assistance. The large majority (over 75 percent) were interested in careers in traditionally women's fields (education, social work, library science).[5]

By 1970-71, the participant profile at the same CCEW had changed, indicating a greater diversity of background. The average student was now younger (36 percent under age 25, as opposed to an earlier 7 percent), more likely to be single, divorced, or widowed (30 percent for these categories combined, compared to 14 percent earlier), and had fewer children than her predecessors. She was more likely to need financial assistance, and more likely to be employed. She was not likely to be interested in noncredit courses, in volunteer work, or solely in self-improvement. Although a slight increase in interest in nontraditional fields was noted, the career aspirations of this later group essentially were still quite traditional.

The typical returning woman was also serious, highly motivated, and troubled with feelings of

inadequacy and of guilt about neglecting her children (and husband, if married) and diverting family resources to her own needs. In spite of these fears (and presumably with support from the Michigan CCEW), these returning women worked harder and performed better than their younger counterparts. A 1974 study, supervised by Helen S. Astin, of returning women in 15 CCEWs indicated a similar profile, except that the women were more oriented to nontraditional careers.

Change in CCEW Concept

Since the early 1960s, there has been growing recognition that the original concept of a CCEW, though progressive for its time, was an elitest one. Though probably not evidenced by the 1964-65 and 1970-71 studies, because both were done at university-based CCEWs, outreach is now being extended to those who might never have gone to college, including women with a variety of lifestyles and coming from a multitude of ethnic, racial, and economic backgrounds.

The phenomenal growth of 2-year community and junior colleges in the last 10 years has been an important element in this change. Since the basic function of such institutions is to take in all students and prepare them for jobs or further education, they provide a natural base for outreach to older women (and men). While CCEWs continue to exist at 4-year colleges and universities, and probably have expanded in number, there has been proliferation of programs at the community college level under a variety of titles: "Program for Re-entry Women," "Adult Career Resource Center," "Mature Student Program," "Center for Displaced Homemakers," and "Discovery Workshops for Women" are but a sampling. These programs prepare women for a broad range of jobs and careers, and offer sophisticated vocational testing, "life-style planning," career guidance, upgrading of basic skills, and the like. The basic difference in concept from that of the original CCEW is that programs today tend to be directed also to

those who formerly were not considered "college material," including minority and working class women.

The movement back to school and work has been accelerated by a number of external factors. Economic conditions have worsened, making it necessary for many married women to work outside the home. Social changes have resulted in higher divorce rates and more single parenting, compelling women to become more independent, psychologically as well as financially. Finally, demographic changes have resulted in a drastic shrinking of the traditional 18- to 22-year-old college population, compelling administrators of postsecondary institutions to look toward nontraditional students. A few of these are men, but the majority are women. In the suburban community colleges, these students are probably still primarily white and middle-class, but the 2-year city colleges have been attracting Latinos, Blacks, and other identifiable ethnic and minority groups.

An additional and critical element -- this in the 1970s -- has been the dramatic rise of the women's movement and its academic arm, women's studies. Starting a few years later than the CEW movement, the women's movement coincided with the burgeoning of women returning to school and work. The first women's studies courses appeared in the late 1960s, the first women's studies programs (WSPs) in the early 1970s.[6] The future relationship between these then-unconnected movements was foreshadowed by a resolution passed at a 1967 national conference on continuing education supported by the Kellogg Foundation. There, conference participants asserted the need for "basic and comprehensive research about women's position in our society" in order to design programs that better met the needs of returning women.[7] This emphasis on new research about women would be a distinguishing element of the new academic movement.

Development of WSPs

The stimulus for establishing WSPs was quite different from that for establishing CCEWs. Women's studies looked to social change as a long-range goal, and, unlike the earlier CCEWs, challenged the concept of a male-centered curriculum. Where CCEWs had been interested in helping women to get back into the mainstream of education and work, women's studies was questioning the very basis of this mainstream.

In other words, CCEWs were practicing what Florence Howe has described as historically the second stage of feminism in women's education: providing equal access and equal opportunities for women in the male-dominated university and work world, comparable to what the progressive leaders of women's colleges were doing at the turn of the century for a much narrower and younger group of women. (This had been considered an advance over the first stage of feminism, which occurred in the 1820s and 1830s and was personified by the pioneers of women's education, who advocated a special curriculum for women to prepare them for the female vocations of teaching and motherhood.)[8]

Women's studies went on to Howe's third stage of feminism: questioning the kind of education both women and men were receiving and the sex stereotyping and male bias built into all aspects of education and, ultimately, into the work world to which these students were heading. This stimulated new research in all disciplines in order to gain the knowledge to correct this bias and stereotyping and to reconstruct the previously unexplored female experience and culture of the past. Courses offered within disciplines (which still predominate) inevitably led to the development of courses in "women's studies," which attempted to be interdisciplinary and look at women's experience holistically, from the vantage point of several disciplines. Also inevitably came the questioning of traditional pedagogy as being inconsistent with the values of feminism and humanism.

The women's studies movement has recently extended its reach to all levels of education, reflecting increased knowledge of the importance of early sex-role socialization, and to settings outside of colleges and universities, reflecting the feminist philosophy that both teacher and student have something valuable to contribute to the learning process and that women's studies in academia is intimately linked to the female experience in the outside world. The National Women's Studies Association (NWSA), founded in January 1977, is dedicated to promoting feminist education "at every educational level and in every educational setting."

Growing Relationship of CCEWs and WSPs

During the last 10 years, the two movements, growing from different philosophies and having different basic purposes, have become intermingled. Women returned to school, and stumbled into women's studies courses, which for them provided the kind of transition that CCEWs were furnishing for others. They began to view themselves as persons of worth, learned that many of their problems were shared by other women, and found support for their intellectual efforts. When they graduated, they often found jobs in existing CCEWs or re-entry programs, or participated in launching new programs or centers for women, either within the academic setting or in the community. In these jobs, they applied the feminist perspective gained through women's studies.

Another typical and perhaps more common scenario of the last decade has been of older women entering a college or university with the help of a re-entry program, then going on to participate in the WSP on that campus. These days, the re-entry process is more likely to take place at a community college, which may or may not have women's studies courses. The returning woman may then transfer to a nearby 4-year

commuter college or university, which probably has a WSP or at least some women's studies courses, but may or may not have a CCEW.

The kind of school likely to be supportive of women's programs (state universities and commuter campuses, rather then prestigious private, residential schools) is precisely the kind that returning women will choose to attend because these schools are less expensive, more accessible, and less threatening. Once there, they seem to gravitate to women's studies courses and to be especially responsive to them while adding a new dimension to the classes. Anyone who has ever taught a women's studies course has had the heady experience of finding that, for at least a few students, it has literally changed their lives.[9]

Need for Data on Re-entry Women

If these scenarios seem vague, this is because of the basic lack of detailed knowlege of what is happening nationally with re-entry women, community colleges, and CCEWs or similar programs for returning women, and, for the purposes of this planning study, how these relate to the rapid growth of women's studies. Why is it important to document what all women's studies people "know" but cannot substantiate -- that re-entry women are vital to their program?

Because the two movements have much to give to each other, women's studies faculty, especially if they are returning women themselves, are in a special position to give older students support and to serve as role models for them. Faculty also need to know how to attract returning women to their classes, because the mature women will have much to contribute. Further, older women, usually more motivated and serious than their younger classmates, are in a position to demand women's studies courses and to support such courses; they can also press for the hiring and retention of feminists to the faculty.

Perhaps most important, women's studies can offer the re-entry woman not only self-confidence, new skills, and a sense of self as an independent person, but also an opportunity to study or re-study the disciplines taught in school from a wholly new and female-oriented perspective. This will give re-entry women a body of knowlege that will help them understand their own experiences as women and prepare them for working with women in the future. Women's studies can also help them gain a sense of pride in learning about women's achievements, and give them access to a range of new role models -- both faculty and guest speakers who are women in nontraditional careers, including careers for women that never existed before.

As one example of how women's studies can fill an important need that CEW programs do not fill, leaders in continuing education have expressed a concern that women who have been prepared for careers have not psychologically integrated their new plans with their traditional values.[10] Women's studies can provide the knowledge and insights necessary for this integration, as well as the social context within which an internalization of feminist values can occur. A recent indication of a similar concern -- that women returning to college and seeking to re-enter the labor market seem to evidence lower and more stereotypically feminine career aspirations than their younger female counterparts -- has led to a recently initiated 2-year project whose goals suggest the possibility of including women's studies as part of the re-entry process.[11]

There is still another, more practical, reason to document the importance of re-entry women to women's studies. Colleges and universities are looking for ways to attract older students. Administrators will be more likely to support WSPs if it can be shown that they attract and keep women returning to school. Here, CCEWs and WSPs that co-exist on the same campus have a common purpose and could work together to mutually support and reinforce each other's efforts.

Questions To Be Addressed

The answers that could be gained from research concerning the mutual dependence of WSPs and re-entry women students would be useful to all educators, but especially women's studies planners. To what extent do community colleges have women's studies courses and how do they define women's studies? To what extent do 4-year colleges and universities have some mechanism to ease the transition for women returning to school or for older women transferring from a nearby community college? To what extent do WSPs supply this transition service, where a specific program does not exist? Do on-campus women's centers, which generally are oriented to the needs of students already enrolled, have contact with re-entry programs or provide outreach to women in the community who might be encouraged to return to school, in effect, serving two populations? What is the relationship between CCEWs and WSPs coexisting on the same campus -- cooperation, indifference, tension, or conflict? Does the previous existence of a CCEW make the acceptance of a WSP easier?[12]

Still other questions that must be addressed include: To what extent do women return to a specific school because that school has a WSP? What is the impact of taking a women's studies course on these "self-selected" students in terms of, for example, improved self-image, career goals, and life choices, compared with the older women who discover women's studies by accident? What percentage of women returning to school actually get involved in women's studies? Conversely, what percentage of students in women's studies classes are re-entry women, especially compared with the percentage of older women in the total student population? Do mature women in a classroom have a positive or negative effect on younger students?

To what extent are minority women returning to school, and what has been their experience with

women's studies? What has been the experience of older women who graduate with a women's studies major (or certificate or minor) in gaining employment, compared with that of younger women? How has the presence of mature women students in the women's studies classroom contributed to the goals of that particular course? To what extent are women's studies instructors re-entry women themselves, and how do they interact with older students? In terms of the goal of women's studies to change the entire curriculum, are older women students likely to be more effective in influencing non-women's studies faculty because they are more serious and likely to be taken more seriously? Has the presence of re-entry women in their classes influenced the research priorities of feminist scholars?

A final set of questions pertains to the relationship between re-entry women in the academic setting and women activists in the community. Do the activists, who may or may not have had experience in academia, feel that their peers who returned to school have "sold out" the women's movement? Do women who return to school and become involved with women's studies learn a new appreciation for their sisters working in the community, or do they absorb the contempt of some professionals for those whose work is less academic? These questions are important because the growing number of women's programs on and off campus are an important potential source of jobs for graduating re-entry women with a women's studies background. Many of these, like centers for battered women, for rape victims, and for displaced homemakers, grew directly out of the work of feminist activists.

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE*

It is a fairly safe generalization that most of the questions put forth in Section 1 (and many more which could be posited) have not been dealt with. At best, there are isolated or inconclusive studies; at worst, there are impressions or questions that have never been addressed.

The methodology used in this planning study has its limitations. Because most of the work is unpublished, and a great deal of it is ongoing, the studies reported on represent only those we were able to uncover by our publication deadline. Additional studies will undoubtedly continue to surface.[13]

We started with a computer search, using the ERIC data base and the Dissertation Abstracts data base. A number of items turned up dealing with either re-entry women or women's studies; not a single one combined both areas. We also sent letters to 301 women's studies programs listed in the fall 1978 issues of Women's Studies Newsletter, to 12 Centers for Research on Women funded by the Ford Foundation, and subsequently to about two dozen people whose names were given to us by these sources. We received about 40 replies, slightly more than half of which were positive in the sense of supplying information directly or alerting us to a useful source.

The literature deals with the following subjects: (1) continuing education or re-entry women (by far the largest category in terms of sources uncovered); (2) women's studies (fewer sources, including a small number of evaluative studies of specific programs); and (3) re-entry women in women's studies (only three such studies were uncovered, and all of these are inconclusive).

*The author acknowledges the assistance of Valli J. Opsahl in reviewing the literature.

There are many ways this literature could have been approached. First, we decided to select from the first two categories listed above only a representative number of documents that shed some light on the problem area. Second, we decided to review only the literature since the early 1970s. Third, we decided to treat the material chronologically rather than thematically. This method is simpler than separating out themes that are overlapping and has the advantage of giving some indication of change over time. Even though the span of years covered is brief, the women's studies movement has grown most rapidly in this period, and the concern with re-entry women has been only peripheral. Howe's Seven Years Later (1977) will probably, in hindsight, prove to be the first formal attention paid to the importance of this concern.

1972-74 Studies of Returning Women

The earliest study uncovered, based on data collected at the University of Washington in 1972, is one of only two known studies that actually attempted to assess the effects on returning women of participation in a women's studies course.[14] (The other was done in 1978 at Northeastern Illinois University.) It is therefore disappointing that this early study, like the later one, suffered from methodological problems and produced inconclusive results.

In 1972, part of the WSP at the University of Washington was housed in the CEW division. The experimental and control groups were drawn from women who attended an orientation session: the experimental group of 33 women (ages 24 to 57) actually enrolled in a women's studies course; the control group of 12 did not enroll in college at all. The authors used as the norm a group of undergraduate women in a beginning psychology course.

The report of the study notes that the experimental group improved in self-image while the control group did not. This was easily explained as the

effect of the first group's following through with the decision to take positive action and the failure of the second group to do so. What was more difficult to explain was why only the women in the norm group improved in their attitudes toward women. The authors argue that this came from their exposure to women's studies and other feminist groups on campus, while the experimental group (and their women's studies class) met off campus and were isolated from the mainstream of a college experience. Since one of the goals of a women's studies course generally is to improve the attitudes of its students towards other women, this argument is not as convincing as it might otherwise be.

A second study undertaken in 1972, at Diablo Valley College in California, was even less convincing than the University of Washington effort, but it attempted less.[15] Students in the school's "Women's Re-entry Program" were asked to write informal evaluative essays on the value of the program after they had taken such general education brush-up courses as math and writing. The authors of the study reported that an initial resistance on the part of some students to the "focus on women" in each of the classes melted away by the end of the semester. The essays themselves, which generally praised the experience, were used by the college's Women's Studies Committee to document the need for a full-fledged women's studies program that included a child-care center, new courses, and a full-time director.

The following year, 1973, saw the publication of the first comprehensive overview of the status of academic women, Academic Women on the Move, funded by the Russell Sage Foundation and based on data collected through 1972. This pathbreaking book included an essay on women returning to school in the 1960s that gives only passing notice to the field of women's studies; it also includes a "state-of-the-art" report on women's studies that focuses on structural and curricular concerns and refers to older women only once,

in a paragraph illustrating the usefulness of women's studies as a vehicle for the study of women of all ages.[16] Clearly, when these articles were written, women's studies was too new to be taken seriously by educators focusing on meeting the needs of the mature woman student, and the founders of the women's studies movement had more basic concerns than considering the participation of re-entry women.

In a 1974 article making a case for women's studies, Barbara Sicherman stressed its importance as a vehicle for "fostering of intellectual and personal automony in women" by eliminating women's internalized negative self-image and "the burdens of socialization, ambivalence, and anxiety in the face of success." More important from the viewpoint of this study, she viewed the participation of mature and experienced women in women's studies as "vital in many ways" because of the effect on younger students and because women's studies can "provide a significant point of re-entry into academic life."[17] Here, while also providing a cogent argument for the study of re-entry women in women's studies, Sicherman was viewing women's studies in the same way that, 10 years earlier, progressive educators were viewing CCEWs -- as a comfortable environment in which re-entry women could develop confidence and self-esteem, as well as the skills to overcome the barriers they would face in academia and afterward in the world of work.

Comprehensive Work by Astin: 1974

Also in 1974, there appeared Some Action of Her Own, which documented, in a series of essays by Helen S. Astin and her research associates, what is probably the most comprehensive study of returning women thus far.[18] Fifteen CCEWs located on college and university campuses were chosen to represent the diversity of existing programs. Unfortunately, only one of these was a 2-year community college, thereby limiting the study's usefulness as a source of information on CCEWs in 1973-74. Another serious drawback of the

study was that the rate of response was lowest at those institutions that had the highest percentage of minority returning women, thereby skewing the resultant "typical profile."

Astin's methodology included mail surveys to 1,000 participants in CCEWs, 300 of their spouses, and 1,000 program alumnae. This was followed up by individual case studies. (In a footnote to the preface, Astin notes other aspects of the many-pronged attacks being made on women's educational problems, and cites women's centers and women's studies, "both of which are worthy of serious study." She expressed the hope that they would receive research attention, and regretted that they were outside the scope of her study.)

Comparisons with Earlier Work

In comparing current participants with alumnae, Astin confirmed earlier studies by noting that the current population was younger (median age of 36, as opposed to the 40 noted 5 years earlier) and more likely to be single. Though noting the wide range of backgrounds, her "typical" returnee was not too different from the earlier profiles: "a 36-year-old white woman from a middle-class background, married to a 42-year-old business executive or professional...two or three children of school age."

Most had previous work experience, usually in traditional women's fields, and strong academic records. Institutional obstacles cited as most important were still cost, scheduling, and location of classes. The most common reason given for entering CCEWs was the desire to become better educated, to achieve independence and a sense of identity, or to prepare for a better job. Only 10 of 649 participants and 8 of 541 alumnae cited as a goal "to be involved in women's programs and issues."

There were some differences from earlier studies. This group appeared more career-oriented than the women who had returned to school 10 years earlier, and their interest in assertiveness training seemed to the authors to be related both to this new interest in careers and to the influence of the women's movement. The women's movement was also seen as alleviating somewhat the anxiety, fear, and guilt noted in earlier studies. This, however, was the perception of the researchers and not necessarily of the subjects.

For the purposes of this study, it is relevant to note that "women's studies," included in the "current field of study" pursued by the respondents, was mentioned by only 1 of the 271 current participants, 2 of the 170 alumnae currently enrolled in the regular program, and 2 of the 190 alumnae while they were in the CCEW. This was the smallest of 11 categories, although those who listed "natural sciences and mathematics" were only slightly more numerous (six as opposed to five).

However, in comparing those enrolled in a degree or certificate program (offering courses for credit) with those involved in a program offering only counseling, workshops, and other noncredit activities, Astin found that the former expressed a more positive attitude toward the women's movement, appeared to be more independent and motivated, were more likely to describe their husbands' attitude as supportive, and were more inclined toward nontraditional career choices and higher career aspirations. Astin also reported that, in assessing changes in attitudes due to their CEW experience, both participants and alumnae cited increased motivation for further education, increased self-awareness, self-esteem, and increased liking and respect for other women among the principal changes. Since all of these are also feminist goals, one can reasonably suppose that these returning women either had been exposed to women's studies or would be responsive to this area in the future if given the opportunity.

Recurrent Theme: Need for Change

One recurrent theme in Astin's book is of special interest: the CEW people spoke of their movement in the same way that women's studies people speak of theirs. The problems they cited most frequently have a familiar ring: shaky financing, lack of staff, failure to attract minority women, and being "on the fringe" of the university rather than "in the mainstream." Carole Leland's review of 15 CEWs is remarkably like Florence Howe's review of 15 WSPs 2 years later, with one crucial difference. The CEW advocates are asking for basic structural and attitudinal changes in the institutions; WSPs are advocating basic curricular changes, as well as structural and attitudinal changes.

The CEW movement has been seeking changes in attitudes of administrators and faculty toward the education of mature women that will make these women an integral part of the student population, not a separate and special population, essentially attacking what is now called "ageism." The women's studies movement has been seeking changes in attitudes of administrators and faculty toward the education of all students, so that the feminists among them will not be treated as a special population and so that both women and men may benefit from the knowledge and insights gained from research on women's experience. Both are trying to eliminate institutional barriers to equal access to education for all women of all ages, but women's studies is also concerned with eliminating sexism in all aspects of this education. The overlapping goals, although a source of confusion to investigators, have been a potential source of mutual strength and reinforcement for the participants.

1974-76 Studies Provide Limited Data

Several evaluative studies of WSPs done in the period 1974-76 offer limited information. A study completed in 1974 of the WSP at the University of

Massachusetts at Boston indicated a positive response from students, but the responses were not broken down by age and sex so that no information can be gained specifically about the attitudes of older women.[19] (The statistics on the students indicated that 35 percent of 182 respondents were 24 years or older and about 25 percent were male.) For the purposes of this paper, it is important to note that, in 1974, re-entry women were not viewed by this program as an identifiable group in need of special attention.

Another evaluative study, done in 1975, of the WSP at Metropolitan Community College (MCC) in Minneapolis, was more helpful because the responses were broken down by age and sex.[20] In this study, re-entry women (defined as having been out of school for 6 to 30 years before attending MCC) constituted one-third of the sample. The typical older woman in the WSP took almost twice the number of credits as the typical older new entering women students and earned more of them with as good a grade point average. The overall conclusion of the evaluating group was that three-fourths of the students in the WSP felt that participation in the program had motivated them to continue their education, due to personal interest expressed by instructors, a gain in self-confidence, awareness of sex discrimination, and the like. For purposes of this study, this is evidence that a WSP can play a significant role for women in the re-entry process.

A third evaluation of a women's studies program, done in 1975 at the University of Maryland, College Park, was less helpful because it did not single out re-entry women.[21] Nine women's studies courses were compared with a control group of 72 students in psychology courses. Standard instruments measuring changes in self-concept and attitudes toward sex roles indicated that, while awareness of and interest in changes in sex roles increased, one semester was not long enough to achieve significant changes in self-concept. Again, although the age range (17 to 61

years) indicated the presence of re-entry women, the investigators did not focus on them as a special group worthy of study.

In 1975, a doctoral dissertation done by Jessie Marie Stone at United States International University compared two groups of women 25 years and older who enrolled at a community college: the experimental group enrolled in a women's studies re-entry program (WSRP); the control group did not.[22] The one major hypothesis that was partially confirmed by the results of the study was that the WSRP would attract women who displayed different characteristics, as measured by standard instruments. The only significant difference showed up in their "feminine role perceptions," as measured by the Inventory of Feminine Values, which were judged "liberal" as compared with the "traditional" perceptions of the non-WSRP group. The WSRP women displayed higher self-esteem and more positive self-concepts, and were more self-actualizing individuals.

Unfortunately, it is not clear from Stone's abstract whether the results supported the other major hypothesis, that participation in the WSRP would produce positive changes. The study seems to confirm that women with less traditional views of woman's role are more likely, given a choice, to enroll in a women's studies program. It is not clear whether the existence of the WSP was crucial in attracting this population to the community college.

Studies Conducted During 1977-78 Period

What is probably the most comprehensive survey of WSPs to date, done by Donna J. Wood of Vanderbilt University in 1977-78, provides another example of the lack of attention paid to the older subgroup of women's studies students by programs and by researchers.[23] Based on extensive questionnaires returned by 162 programs, Wood compiled impressive

statistics on history, budget, strengths, weaknesses, and the like. Re-entry students are mentioned only once.

Wood reported that 43 percent of the programs offered services beyond coursework, counseling, and community activities, and she listed nine kinds of services; only one of these nine is services "for adults: re-entry program, adult education, continuing education, Center for Displaced Homemakers." This category received only nine mentions, or 5.8 percent of the total mentions under "other functions performed by programs."

It is tempting to conclude that WSPs were doing very little for re-entry women, except that "counseling" and "community activities" might very well have included service to mature women thinking of returning to school. Or were there other programs on campus designed expressly for re-entry women? These questions, in an otherwise admirable report, were never even asked, and an opportunity to gain information about re-entry women in a large number of WSPs was missed.

Another study of the mature woman returning to school provides only limited information about involvement with women's studies. Janet Behnke, a student at Northeastern Illinois University, in 1976 did a survey of 100 women (ages 26 to 60 years) returning to school in 15 institutions in the Chicago area.[24] Since only four of these institutions offered women's studies courses, her finding that only one-third of the respondents had been involved in women's studies is not significant. It should be noted, however, that two-thirds felt that women's studies should be offered in their schools, and one-half believed it to be relevant for re-entry women. Also, the fact that two-thirds of the respondents felt that the women's movement was not influential in their decision to return to school is not significant unless more information is obtained

about their image of the women's movement. Again, those questions were not the central focus of an otherwise useful study, but suggest that a different research design might produce more significant data.

Two studies done over the period 1976-1978 by Anne B. Steere, Coordinator of "Women Returning to School" at Southern Methodist University, led to the conclusion that undergraduate women aged 25 and over returning to school received vital support from the women's studies faculty. In her words: "There is no doubt in my mind that Women's Studies...is one of the most important non-threatening means of woman learning about herself...The women who take advantage of such programs are moving quickly out of the second-class stereotype."[25]

There has been only one major study, completed in 1978 by Alleen Deutsch at Miami University, that dealt with coordinators of WSPs.[26] Deutsch found that only 5 of the 23 coordinators who responded to her questionnaire could be classified as re-entry women. This does not jibe with what Florence Howe found in her 1976 survey of 15 WSPs: that 9 of the 15 coordinators were re-entry women. Howe also found that one-third of the faculty she interviewed were re-entry feminist scholars, which she defines loosely as "older" women who have earned advanced degrees during the last decade.[27]

In an attempt to corroborate Howe s impression, a quick survey of 29 members of the women's studies faculty at Northeastern Illinois University (a state-funded commuter institution located on the northwest side of Chicago) brought the following results: 6 were re-entry women, 19 were not, and 4 did not return the questionnaire.[28] The coordinator is a re-entry woman (one of the five reported by Deutsch). Obviously, more research needs to be done on both administrators and faculty.

The final study to be reviewed, like the first, was actually an attempt to assess the importance of women's studies in the decisions of women to return to and remain in school. The study was conducted at Northeastern Illinois University as an internship project by Margaret Perry, then a graduate student in adult education at Northern Illinois University.[29] Questionnaires were distributed to women's studies classes during the winter 1978 trimester. Of the 68 questionnaires returned, only 52 respondents met the criteria for inclusion in the sample, and, of these, only 36 were returning women (defined for this study as women 25 and over).

Although the size of the sample and the range of the responses precluded any definite conclusions, the data obtained by Perry reflecting attitudes toward women's studies is suggestive. Twenty-seven of the 36 respondents did not know about the WSP when applying for admission to Northeastern; of the 9 who did, however, 5 said this was a factor in their decision to enroll. The results also showed that, while over half the respondents said that women's studies had no effect on their decision to remain in school, almost two-thirds agreed that women's studies helped keep them interested in school. An even larger percentage had positive comments about their women's studies classes, noting that the instructors were "student-oriented and personal" and "more aware of the needs of the returning woman student" than other instructors. Though inconclusive, Perry's findings suggest that women's studies can be an especially positive experience for re-entry women. Further research is clearly indicated.[30]

Reasons for Lack of Data

Before concluding this section, it is appropriate to consider why so little has been done on the relationship between women's studies and re-entry women. Patricia Cayo Sexton, writing in 1976, misinterpreted the women's studies movement as "created largely by

and for younger women" who "are undoubtedly the daughters and kin of the suburban housewives who enroll in continuing education programs..."[31] Her suggestions for accommodating re-entry women are directed toward the regular academic and CEW programs, not toward women's studies. This misperception was cleared away definitively by Howe's findings on the prevalence of re-entry women among women's studies students in her Seven Years Later.

A more likely explanation for the lack of data on women's studies in the literature on re-entry women is that most researchers take only a disciplinary view of their subject. The people who have done studies on the characteristics and needs of re-entry women since the women's studies movement began (even when doing it as a project for a women's studies course), have asked only the conventional questions of the sociologist, the psychologist, or the guidance counselor. Since nobody previously had asked about women's studies, there was no precedent to follow, and it takes an unusually broad vision to ask the kind of question that has never been asked before.

For example, one author of a study of "Women's Entry and Re-entry into the Labor Force" used a questionnaire asking students on her campus whether they had ever consulted the women's center, but did not ask about their involvement with the WSP on campus.[32] Several explanations for this omission support the previous hypothesis. The researcher was a student in educational psychology/counseling and guidance and worked in the admissions office of her school. Her personal contacts were with the student services division of her university, so it was logical for her to distribute the questionnaire to women visiting the counseling office, the job placement office, and the women's center (as well as to two of her classes). The women's studies program, which was in the academic affairs division of her university, was outside of her immediate universe, and she probably had very little contact with it.

There is apparently less excuse for people doing evaluations or assessments of women's studies programs because they are supposed to take an interdisciplinary view of research. Unfortunately, most of us have been trained as narrowly as our students and have the same difficulty breaking out of our limited vision. The social scientists who do evaluative research have, for this reason, literally not been able to see what, when asked, they all "know": that re-entry women are vital to women's studies.

There is perhaps an even simpler explanation. Re-entry women, while they have been defined in different ways, are relatively easy to identify and therefore to study. Women's studies, and especially women's studies programs, have been less easy to identify because they have been subject to evolving definitions and changing circumstances. Many programs listed as such are turning out to be CCEWs rather than WSPs. Being more difficult to identify, WSPs have been more difficult to evaluate and analyze. Those doing surveys of such programs have also had such complex and pressing problems to consider that the presence or importance of re-entry women in the program has been easy to overlook.

This section cannot, in all fairness, be concluded without noting that, for people involved in administering or teaching women's studies, who are overburdened and overextended, there is usually very little opportunity to do research of any kind. When we do have such an occasion, we are compelled to do it within our own discipline in order to keep our jobs or get tenure. The opportunity to do interdisciplinary research in women's studies is still a luxury for most scholars.

As a final footnote, it should also be noted how often, in the course of this planning study, simply asking the question about the relationship between re-entry women and women's studies has stimulated people to come up with new ideas for research or with

ways to modify existing or planned research. The University of Cincinnati, for example, has a number of faculty who are addressing the concerns of re-entry students, but none had thought to focus on their interaction with women's studies. The letter sent to the women's studies program prompted the assistant director to think of evaluating their program from this new vantage point: "I see that as our responsibility."[33]

3. AMBIGUITIES AND PROBLEMS

The researcher embarking on studies of re-entry women and women's studies will be confronted with ambiguities and be compelled to define terms (at least for her or his particular research project) that are now not well-defined because the two movements involved are in a state of flux. This situation was best described in 1975 by a researcher reporting on a study of the families of women returning to school: "One remarkable aspect of the present study is that it has allowed us to watch part of a social revolution in progress."[34] While he was referring to that part involving the changing attitudes of and arrangements between men and women, the "stage of accelerated evolution" he described could also be applied to the broader movements.

The researcher undoubtedly will also face problems, in addition to the obvious ones of time and funding, that will affect the success of the research. In this section, I list the major areas that are undergoing change, both in nomenclature and in content, and some of the problems that may be encountered. This list reflects a number of sources: my own readings and observations as coordinator of a women's studies program for over 3 years; the comments of Valli J. Opsahl, who assisted me in reviewing the literature; conversations with the members of the NIE women's studies planning team; and the responses to my requests for information, most of which were impressionistic but suggestive of certain difficulties inherent in this research.

Changing Profile of the Re-entry Woman

The rapid and significant growth in the number of women returning to school has resulted in the emergence of different subgroups having different educational needs. The typical returnee of the 1960s (a white, middle-class housewife in her thirties or

forties, preparing for or reacting to the empty-nest syndrome) has been joined by a variety of other types of women, reflecting such significant societal changes as a shift in emphasis from the traditional pattern of early and continuous education to "lifelong learning," changes in the workplace, and special efforts to encourage minority women to return to school.

A relatively new profile is that of the younger woman who attends school on a permanent part-time basis.[35] Many of her needs, in terms of scheduling, financial assistance, career guidance, child care, and other support services, are similar to those of the older woman who has been out of school for a number of years. Another new profile is of the younger woman who attends school intermittently during her twenties and early thirties, dividing her time between school, work, and family.

These emerging profiles reflect the fact that women are marrying later, having their first child at a later age, and having fewer children or none at all. They also reflect the higher divorce rate, which could mean time out of school for personal adjustments, as well as a return to school to prepare for earning a living. Another pattern that is changing the mode in which women obtain education involves the small but growing number of couples who put a high value on shared childrearing, and therefore require flexible scheduling so they can participate in education and career development simultaneously, rather than following the traditional pattern in which the husband "went first" while the wife "waited her turn." This is often part of a larger movement which seeks to integrate family and work roles for women and men as a vital step in changing all the social and economic arrangements of society.

Other changes that affect the entry and re-entry of women into the educational system are increasing inflation and economic difficulties which send married women back to school to prepare for work, take single

women out of school to earn a living, and otherwise force life changes. Changing job patterns which send both women and men back to school for retraining and which require skilled, up-to-date career counseling, are yet another influence.

It should be clear at this point that the researcher will have to pinpoint the population she or he is discussing, as well as give attention to such subgroups as displaced homemakers, single mothers, and women over 60 years of age. These three "disadvantaged" groups, estimated to number about 26 million, suffer even more than other women from the sex stereotyping of our society: previous denial of educational opportunity has deprived them of the skills they need to earn basic, decent livelihoods.[36]

Every women's studies administrator has seen examples of each of these types of women: women in their thirties and forties for whom going back to school is the first step toward independence from husband and children (a step which will often, but not always, lead to divorce); women in their late twenties who have been in and out of school, and perhaps in and out of marriage; single women, often lesbians, who are committed to nontraditional relationships or lifestyles and need both support and education for lifelong work; women in their fifties and sixties who have decided to retire from jobs or reduce household responsibilities and "finally do something for myself"; minority women who are ambivalent about the women's movement but whose needs are not being met by "special" programs.

For each of these types of re-entry women, researchers will have to pose this question: what can women's studies offer them that other educational programs cannot?

Changing Definition of "Women's Studies"

"What is a women s studies course?" will be at least as challenging a question as "what is a re-entry

woman?" In the early stages of developing a women's studies program, a key consideration is finding people willing and able to teach courses about women, rather than setting up criteria for such courses. Many schools are still at this stage.

As programs become established and funded, and there are enough courses to offer a major or minor, the question of what constitutes a women's studies course becomes more important. The program now has the luxury of establishing criteria and rejecting courses that do not meet these criteria. The increased number of courses has been made possible by an expansion in research and a constantly evolving definition of "women's studies" by the scholars in the field, a significant element in the dilemma of trying to pinpoint the meaning at a given moment.

The difficult questions in deciding on criteria for offering or cross-listing a course as "women's studies" deal less with the content and more with the manner in which the course is presented. How nonsexist or feminist should instructors be, and how committed should they be to questioning the traditional body of knowledge in their field? How involved should they be with social change outside the classroom? Should there be a special category for courses that do not meet the criteria but nevertheless provide women with useful information or skills?[37] Are these like the courses that are offered by the CCEW on campus, or that would be if there were a center for re-entry women? Should faculty who do not identify themselves as feminists but are friendly to the program be encouraged to participate and even teach courses to give them an opportunity to expand their knowledge and feminist consciousness?

Still other questions include: How flexible can a program be and still maintain its integrity as a force for eliminating sexism in education? How useful are evaluations by students, and should distinctions be made between students who define themselves as

feminists and those who do not? Are there rules or procedures that enable the board or committee, in the absence of "proof" of the sexism of the course, to drop a course from its list without explanation? In the program at Northeastern Illinois University, for example, the board has ruled that all members of the women's studies faculty must return one set of student evaluation questionnaires at least once a year for every course they teach. Failure to do so permits the board to drop the course on that technicality, but also provides an opportunity for the board to meet with the instructor and suggest changes that will increase the feminist content of the course.

The researcher will have to be aware of the delicate position that most established programs find themselves in: they have little real power in the university except the power that comes from the ability to persuade and convert faculty to a nonsexist stance; they also have a responsibility to their students to offer (or cross-list) courses that have come to mean a welcomed departure from the sexism of most traditional courses.

The researcher has at least two options: to accept the program's definition of what constitutes a women's studies course, or to establish her or his own criteria and allow the programs involved to determine how many of their courses meet these criteria. Either way, this will be a problem, and it cannot be ignored in planning the research.

Changing Definition of a "Women's Studies Program"

In the early seventies, all programs designed especially for women tended to be lumped together under the broad category "women's programs." In recent years, there has been a growing recognition that many of these programs are not designed to liberate women from the sex stereotypes of their society and to change the world of education and work. They are designed to help their students adjust

to the unchanged society and fit themselves into the unchanged mainstream of education and work. There are CCEWs and other educational programs for adult women both on and off campuses that indeed serve the purpose for which women's studies was created, but there are many others that do not.

The researcher needs to be aware of the extremely broad range of programs for women that are available in a variety of settings and with diverse goals. Concern was expressed several years ago by CEW people about the many programs that were jumping on the bandwagon and advertising themselves as serving returning women, but were ignoring the original goals of continuing education.[38] Researchers concerned with both the goals of CCEWs and the goals of WSPs have double the concern.

One example of the variety of programs that can co-exist, in this case cooperatively and successfully, on a single campus was given in a recent article in the Women's Studies Newsletter on the University of Texas at Arlington.[39] The first program was the Center for Women's Studies, which gave rise to the Women's Center, from which evolved, with the help of a State grant, the Displaced Homemakers Center.

The key program, because it has received the most funding and support, is the Women's Center. This has become a multipurpose center that has taken on a variety of functions. In the absence of a budget for women's studies, it coordinates and publicizes the courses offered by women's studies faculty on campus, who in turn participate in the efforts of the center. As its main function, the center provides a variety of support services to women on campus and in the community and cooperates with the Office of Continuing Education to offer noncredit courses, seminars, and workshops of interest to women, ranging from assertiveness training and self-defense, to career options for mature women, to courses on single parenting. In effect, the Women's Center has served as a re-entry

program, as well as providing services to students already enrolled. The Displaced Homemakers Center is seen as meeting the needs of one special subgroup of women served by the Women's Center.

The authors cite the three centers as a model for other campuses: "While all are involved in women's education, each uses different methods to achieve the goal of helping women. Women's Studies is academic and research-oriented. The Women's Center provides awareness programs which are vital university and community services. And the Displaced Homemakers Center provides one-to-one counseling to a specific group of community women." For the purposes of this planning study, it should be added that the Office of Continuing Education appears not to be (in this case) a program geared to women's needs, but only a vehicle used by the women's programs on campus. Also, the authors note that the one group of women not reached by any of the centers are the minority women, who have access to other programs on campus that are geared to minorities but not to women.

How typical is this campus? The data gathering on women's programs nationally has been so sparse, that there is no way to answer the question at this time.

Hostility of Traditional Faculty to Re-entry Women

Although administrators may welcome re-entry women as a solution to declining enrollment, faculty are apparently less enthusiastic. Brought up in the tradition of turning out scholars in their own image, many male (and female) professors balk at students who are nontraditional in age and sex, and perhaps in class, race, and other ways. In some cases, experience has reinforced their fear that these students will be more likely to criticize traditional forms of pedagogy and less likely to follow in the footsteps of their mentors.

In short, a large body of faculty are threatened by all manner of change, and older women, especially those who are involved in women's studies, are likely to be the most threatening. The researcher will have to be prepared for resistance and lack of cooperation from some faculty, and, if possible, devise means of countering or moderating their attitudes.

The Re-entry Woman's Image of the Women's Movement

In several studies that examined the influence of the women's movement on the decision of women to return to or remain in school, it appeared that many respondents still equated the women's movement with the mythical "bra-burner" image of the past and took pains to disassociate themselves from it. They thereby deny the real influence that the movement may have had on their lives.

Older women who have invested most of their adult lives in housekeeping and child-rearing are especially threatened by a movement that they perceive as negating the values on which they have built their lives. Nevertheless, many of these women are receptive to going back to school and expanding their perceptions, if given the opportunity and encouragement. Researchers will have to be sensitive to this problem and devise a methodology that will avoid backing these women into a corner.

4. RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR RESEARCH

The data gathering needs are so great, and the state of knowledge of what is happening in women's studies with respect to re-entry women is so sparse, that many simultaneous approaches are needed in research on this subject. A notable lack in the few studies that have been done is the inclusion of control groups for purposes of comparison. Insofar as possible, an attempt has been made here to suggest how this can be remedied.

Implicit in each of the recommendations for research that follows is that the broader the data base (e.g., the number of institutions surveyed), the more significant the data will be. Also implicit -- and sometimes explicit -- is the value of longitudinal studies to show change over time. Although such studies are the most difficult to carry out, they yield invaluable data that cannot be derived any other way.

It is also recommended that, wherever possible, mail surveys be followed by onsite visits, that standard interview formats be supplemented by indepth case studies, and that all questionnaires include at least some open-ended questions. Again, these recommendations are made in an attempt to obtain information not otherwise accessible, for use by those involved in making policy and plans for women's studies programs.

The first three subsections below recommend research that will provide information on the interaction of re-entry women and women's studies, the focus of this planning study. The next three subsections recommend studies of re-entry women and women's studies in specific settings. A final subsection is intended to produce, in effect, a guide to educational institutions for use by mature feminists, as well as by women's studies planners.

Numbers of Re-entry Women
Involved in Women's Studies

Data are needed on the percentage of re-entry women students involved with women's studies at a given institution, as compared with the percentage of re-entry women in the student population as a whole at the same institution. Further breakdown is needed in terms of the degree of involvement: number of courses taken, independent study projects, certificate or minor, major, and the like.

Data are likewise needed on the percentage of women students involved with a given WSP who are re-entry women, as compared with the percentage of women students involved with the same WSP who are not re-entry. Comparisons should include degree of success in completing the program.[40] (At present, the number of men involved with women's studies is small, but this could change in the future; unfortunately, a consideration of their needs is outside the scope of this planning study.)

Finally, data are needed on the percentage of women teaching women's studies who are re-entry women, as compared with the women faculty as a whole. This does not assume that all persons teaching women's studies will be women, but only that the number of re-entry male faculty will be minimal. Even this could change in the future as more men are involved with midlife career changes.

Changing Profile of Re-entry Women
And Impact of Women's Studies on Them

The same basic questions need to be asked of re-entry women as of all women students -- e.g., age, race, ethnic and family background, marital status, career choice, and motivation for going to college. Comparisons can then be made between those who become involved with women's studies and those who do not.

It would be especially useful to women's studies planners to find out why specific groups -- such as minority women of various kinds -- do not become involved in larger numbers. Data such as these could be used in identifying the needs and problems of different types of re-entry women and in determining how women's studies programs can be more responsive to them.

It would also be useful to determine the difference in the perceptions of women's studies (and of the women's movement) by younger women and by those in a later stage of life. Do re-entry women feel threatened by what they see as radical elements in women's studies, or has their experience been such that they can respond more knowingly to complex women's issues, or both?

Of the re-entry women who do become involved in women's studies (again, a breakdown should be made in terms of degree of involvement), questions should be asked about the impact of this involvement on them, in an effort to determine what women's studies adds to the value of their education that other academic studies do not. This could include personal growth, intellectual growth, career preparation, and anything else the students feel is significant. An effort should be made to distinguish between those re-entry women who chose women's studies because of their previous involvement with the women's movement (i.e., self-selected) and those who stumbled into it, as well as between those who consider themselves feminists and those who do not. Especially important here would be the effect of involvement in women's studies of those who initially did not consider themselves feminists.

An effort should also be made to determine the impact on re-entry women of the type of women's studies instructor and the type of pedagogy employed: (1) re-entry as opposed to one whose career has been continuous; (2) female versus male; (3) older versus younger; (4) overtly feminist (or lesbian feminist) or

not; (5) traditional pedagogy versus "feminist" style or other innovative style. All of these reactions could be compared with the reactions of traditional-age students in the same classes, as well as with the reactions of re-entry women to non-women's studies instructors.

Impact on Women's Studies of
Involvement of Re-entry Women

Surveys are needed of the role played by re-entry women in the formation of a WSP, the introduction of new women's studies courses, the introduction of women's studies material into non-women's studies classes, and other aspects of expansion of women's studies in educational institutions.

Surveys are also needed of women's studies instructors to determine their perception of: (1) the effect on younger students of mature women in the class; (2) the influence of re-entry women on goals and degree of success of the class; (3) the differences in motivation, achievements, and research interests of mature women and younger women; and (4) other effects or differences observed. Such information would help to determine what re-entry women add to a women's studies class that younger students do not.

As an added dimension, it would be useful to know whether those women whose return to school stemmed from an involvement in community feminist activism had more impact than other re-entry women.

Re-entry Women and Women's Studies
In the Community Colleges

We need a great deal of information regarding women's studies and re-entry women in community colleges.[41] Given the mission of these colleges, they are likely to attract re-entry women as a major

part of their student population, but we need data on their percentages and on how these figures have changed over the last 5 to 10 years.

Do they offer courses that they define as women's studies, and what are their goals in doing so? Are 2-year colleges, with closer ties to the immediate community, restricted in offering controversial courses and programs? Do feminists on faculties of community colleges offer women's studies disguised under a more traditional rubric? Are community colleges responding to the needs of local industries in preparing women for specific jobs, or do they have a commitment to offer a broader education that will allow their students more flexibility in their work choices?

Regarding the relation between 2-year and 4-year colleges: Do the women's studies courses at community colleges offer breadth to curricula that tend to be more vocationally oriented than in 4-year schools? Do 2-year colleges that feed into 4-year colleges with WSPs tend to offer fewer women's studies courses? How much communication on a regular basis do the women's programs at 2-year colleges have with the WSPs of the 4-year colleges in the area, and what is their attitude toward them? The same question could be asked of the administrations of both schools -- do admissions officers of colleges and universities, for example, recruit at nearby community colleges as well as at high schools? If the 4-year college does not have a re-entry program, do many women "fall into the crack" and drop out of school in the process of making the transition from the 2-year school?[42]

Update of Current Status of CCEWs
And Other Programs for Re-entry Women

The Campbell article, which reflected the state-of-the-art in 1971, needs to be updated to include the effects of the following developments of the seventies: the women's movement; the growth of WSPs and

women's centers; the proliferation of community colleges; the shrinking academic world and the accompanying economic squeeze; and the changing labor market.

We need to know where these CCEWs are located, their relationship to the parent institution, their attitudes toward their clients, whether they offer any courses which they define as women's studies courses, whether they co-exist with a WSP, and the relationship among the various programs for women on a given campus. Most important, we need to know what new directions the CCEWs have been taking and what new projects are being generated.

Where more than one type of program exists on the same campus, the setting is ripe for extensive and longitudinal comparative studies, including follow-up studies of graduates. Such studies might focus on re-entry women who began at a CCEW and graduated without contact with the WSP on campus, on re-entry women who participated in the WSP without any contact with the CCEW, or on re-entry women who participated in both programs. The control group could be a group that had contact with neither program. Comparisons could be made of levels of motivation, achievement, self-confidence, skills, career aspirations, and attitudes toward other women and toward the women's movement. If the WSP or the women's center on campus offers courses especially geared to re-entry women, the participants of this program could also be included in the research.

The ideal longitudinal study would begin when a woman starts to contemplate a return to school and follow her through each step of the way, noting her goals before and after entering school and the influences of the various women's programs she encounters. Such a study might end at an appropriate interval of time after she achieves her goal, whether it be graduation, personal growth, a job, or a career.[43]

Update on Women's Centers On and Off Campus

Again, very little information has been gathered on women's centers, which, unlike CCEWs, generally derive from the women's movement and provide a variety of support services, legal and medical referrals, and courses and workshops for women. We need to know where women's centers exist, what services they have specifically for re-entry women, and what percentage of their clients are in this category. Do they offer women's studies courses, and is there some mechanism for students to get credit for these courses? Is there material in these courses that is transferrable for use in credit courses? What is the relationship of the women's centers to the WSPs in their area (or on their campus)?

We need to know how many women's centers on campuses are multipurpose, i.e., do outreach to the community as well as serving students on campus, and perhaps also offer women's studies courses or serve to coordinate courses offered by departments. Where a campus lacks both a re-entry program and a women's center, does the WSP attempt to serve all these functions?

The results of these data gathering efforts will be helpful to policymaking bodies of WSPs in deciding how to allocate their scarce resources. The data will also provide policymakers with facts to use in convincing their administrations to create new programs geared to services as well as studies.

Assessment of Institutional Attitudes Toward Women's Programs

We need to know more about how institutions of various kinds view women's programs, and how recent developments in the academic world have affected these views. Have their priorities shifted? Which type of program are they most likely to support and why? How do they view re-entry women, and how sympathetic are

they to flexible and part-time scheduling? Has the student shortage made them more responsive to both older women and women's studies, or has the economic squeeze inclined them to cut out "fringe programs"?

Information such as this on colleges and universities throughout the country could serve as a guide for use by the feminist educator, as well as by the mature feminist returning to school.

5. CONCLUSION

This planning study can have only one conclusion: so much has changed in the last decade both in women's studies and in the profile of the re-entry woman, and so few studies have been done on the interaction between the two, that much research is needed. Support for this research, and for the publication of future monographs based on this research, must come from funding agencies -- women's studies programs do not have the financial or staff resources to gather data on the scale recommended in this paper, and they are unlikely to get funding from their institutions in this period of economic crisis.

It is only when the recommended surveys are completed, and the suggested data collected and interpreted, that interdisciplinary scholars can perceive the changing trends from a broader view and begin to understand the relationship among three historically important and related educational movements of the 1960s and 1970s: the return of unprecedented numbers of women to school; the establishment of centers to aid women in this transition and make educational institutions more responsive to their needs; and the growth of women's studies programs to change the kind of education that these women (and other women and men) receive. It is only then that women's studies planners can formulate policies on the basis of knowledge rather than on impressions and intuition.

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1. See Jean W. Campbell, "Women Drop Back In: Educational Innovation in the Sixties," Academic Women on the Move, edited by Alice S. Rossi and Ann Calderwood (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1973); Helen S. Astin, ed., Some Action of Her Own: The Adult Woman And Higher Education (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath & Co., 1976); and Claudia R. Gaillard, "CEW Programs on College Campuses: A Review of Research and Literature," Lifelong Learning: The Adult Years (January 1979).

2. For statistics on numbers of women and numbers of programs in 1976, see Ruth Lyon, "The Center for Continuing Education at Sarah Lawrence College, 1962-1976," (Masters thesis, Sarah Lawrence College, 1976), p. 27. For data on programs through 1973, based on statistics compiled by the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor, see Astin, p. 49.

3. Betty Friedan, Feminine Mystique (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1963).

4. R.M. Oltman, Campus 1970: Where Do Women Stand? (Washington, D.C.: American Association of University Women, 1970); Lyon, p. 16.

5. Campbell, p. 104ff. Statistics in the next paragraph are from the same source. The extensive bibliography accompanying this article reflects the "state-of-the-art" of programs for women returning to school as of 1972.

6. See Florence Howe and Carol Ahlum, "Women's Studies and Social Change," Academic Women on the Move, edited by Alice S. Rossi and Ann Calderwood (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1973). Like the Campbell article, this essay and its accompanying bibliography comprise the best description of women's studies in 1972.

7. Campbell, p. 114.

8. Florence Howe, "Feminism and the Education of Women," The Frontiers of Knowledge, edited by Judith Stiehm (University of California Press, 1976).

9. Numerous examples of this are scattered throughout Florence Howe's Seven Years Later: Women's Studies Programs in 1976 (Washington, D.C.: National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs, 1977). This review of 15 established programs is the most recent overview of the women's studies movement and has served to pinpoint gaps in existing knowledge.

10. Astin, pp. 117 and 124.

11. This study, funded by the State Board for Higher Education, is being undertaken in Maryland by Dundalk Community College, in conjunction with the Johns Hopkins University Evening College and Morgan State University. The project coordinator is Elizabeth Mackall at Dundalk C.C. (7200 Sollers Point Rd., Dundalk, Md. 21222). The inference is made from their invitation to the executive director of NWSA to participate in one of the initial conferences (letter to Elaine Reuben from Elizabeth Mackall, May 2, 1979).

12. Edith Mucke, director of CEW at the University of Minnesota, is doing a study that she thinks will show that the earlier existence of the CCEW made the later acceptance of a WSP easier; private conversation, February 15, 1979.

13. We almost missed an early study done at the University of Washington because staff there did not respond to our request and, although the study is listed in the ERIC data base, we did not pick it up, either because the program calls itself "women studies" or because the descriptor used omitted the apostrophe: "Womens Studies."

14. Linda M. Rosenwood and Patricia W. Lunneborg, "Women in Continuing Education," (Washington University and Seattle Bureau of Testing, 1972). My thanks to Nancy Porter of Portland State University for bringing this and the work of Beatrice Taines to my attention.

15. Beatrice Taines, "First Semester of the Diablo Valley College Women's Re-entry Program, Fall 1972," (Diablo Valley College, 1973).

16. Campbell, p. 114; and Howe and Ahlum, p. 412.

17. Barbara Sicherman, "The Invisible Woman: The Case for Women's Studies." Women in Higher Education, edited by Todd Furniss and Patricia Albjerg Graham (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Higher Education, 1974), pp. 155-174.

18. Some Action of Her Own is a collection of essays by Helen Astin and two research associates, Carole Leland and Joseph Katz, with an introductory chapter by Elizabeth L. Cles, one of the co-founders of the Minnesota Plan, and a concluding chapter by Jessie Bernard.

19. Thomas W. Mangione and Gertje Else Wiersma, "An Evaluation of the University of Massachusetts/ Boston Women's Studies Program" (Boston, 1974). For more information about this study and one by June Stein, Mary Pruitt, and Carol Kilps, see the companion monograph on "The Effectiveness of Women's Studies Teaching" by Nancy Porter and Meg Eileenchild.

20. June Stein et al. "Evaluation of the Women's Studies Program at Metropolitan Community College" (Minneapolis, 1975, 1976).

21. Sharon A. Schueman and William E. Sedlacek, "An Evaluation of a Women's Studies Program" (University of Maryland, College Park, 1976).

22. Jessie Marie Stone, "Value Characteristics of Mature Women Students Related to Enrollment in a Women's Studies Re-Entry Program" (Ph.D. dissertation, U.S. International University, 1975). My thanks to Nancy Porter for bringing the abstract of this dissertation to my attention.

23. Donna J. Wood, "Women's Studies Programs in American Higher Education: A Report to Coordinators and Directors" (Vanderbilt University, 1978).

24. Janet M. Behnke, "An Investigation Into the Problems and Challenges of the Mature Woman College Student" (Northeastern Illinois University, 1976).

25. Letter from Anne B. Steere, May 7, 1979. No information on methodology or data to support these conclusions was sent.

26. Alleen Deutsch, "Women's Studies as Institutional Policy--An Analysis of the Program Coordinator's Role" (Ph.D. dissertation, Miami University, 1978).

27. Howe, Seven Years Later, especially chapter 5.

28. For the purposes of the survey, I considered the faculty women "re-entry" if their educational and professional careers had been interrupted for a period of 5 years or more; 1-year maternity leaves or time off to get advanced degrees were not considered discontinuities.

29. Margaret Perry, "The Influence of Women's Studies on Re-Entry Women" (Northern Illinois University, 1978).

30. Further research, using an improved version of the Perry questionnaire, is being undertaken by Valli J. Opsahl (a graduate student at Northeastern Illinois University and research assistant on this planning study), on another commuter campus in the Chicago area.

31. Patricia Cayo Sexton, Women in Education (Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1976), pp. 149-160.

32. Judy Tiger, "Women's Entry and Re-Entry into the Labor Force" (Master's thesis, California State University, Northridge, 1979).

33. Communication from Carol J. Blum, assistant director, Office of Women's Studies, University of Cincinnati, February 23, 1979.

34. Joseph Katz, in Some Action of Her Own, p. 105.

35. At Northeastern Illinois University, which has a 57 percent female student population and an average student age of about 28, the percentage of part-time undergraduates rose from 24 percent to almost 40 percent in the last 5 years. It is reasonable to assume a large overlap with the category of undergraduates who are exclusively evening students, which jumped from 5 percent to 18 percent in this same period.

36. See the excellent publication by Carol Eliason, Neglected Women: The Educational Needs of Displaced Homemakers, Single Mothers and Older Women (Washington, D.C.: National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs, 1978).

37. At Northeastern Illinois University, we have a category called "Courses of Special Interest to Women," which we list for the information of students without any endorsement from the Women's Studies Board; these courses are not counted toward the minor.

38. Astin, p. 18.

39. Jeanne Ford and Barbara Brown, "Women's Centers at the University of Texas/Arlington: A Model for Growth," Women's Studies Newsletter 7, no. 2 (Spring 1979).

40. Portland State University has one of the few programs with any hard data. Only 25 percent (20 of 80) of their presently enrolled certificate students (in effect, majors) are returning women but 80 percent (18) of those who completed the program were returnees.

41. Allana Elovson, author of the companion monograph on "Women's Studies in the Community College," has informed me that Jack Mesirow of the Institute for Adult Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, recently completed a major study of women's re-entry programs in community colleges and published a handbook on evaluating these programs. He has not, according to Elovson, distinguished between those colleges that offer women's studies (however defined) and those that do not.

42. This has been a problem in our area. The closest suburban community college has extensive counseling and support services for older women. Northeastern Illinois University, to which most of them transfer, has an established WSP and an Office for Women's Services, but neither has the resources to aid in the transition of women to a larger campus; there is no formal re-entry program, and the Continuing Education program is not geared to women. The Returning and Adult Transfer Student (RATS) club is a recent innovation and hopes to prod the Office of Community Services into establishing a re-entry program.

43. See follow-up studies done on students who began college in one of the CEW programs at George Washington University: Ruth Helen Osborn and Mary Jo Strauss, Development and Administration of Continuing Education for Women, 1964-1974 (Washington, D.C.: The George Washington University, 1975).

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